

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 IO-13 AID-05 PC-01 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00  
COME-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 MCT-01 /102 W  
-----086464 221744Z /43

R 221555Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7423  
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 1385

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, ES  
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT: FEBRUARY 1978

BEGIN SUMMARY.

EL SALVADOR WAS, ON THE SURFACE, MODERATELY QUIETER ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS FRONT DURING FEBRUARY. THERE WERE NO MAJOR DEMONSTRATIONS HELD AND THE ONE ASSASSINATION (RETIRED COLONEL FRANCISCO RENE CHACON WHO HAD ENEMIES IN EVERY SECTOR OF SOCIETY-SEE SAN SALVADOR 0615) WAS GIVEN MINIMAL PUBLICITY AND COULD HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT BY ALMOST ANYONE. THE CHURCH-STATE CONFLICT SHOWED NO SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT, BUT WAS NOT AS OPENLY CONTENTIOUS AS IT HAS BEEN IN RECENT MONTHS. THE POSITION OF POLITICAL PARTIES FORMALIZED THEIR NON-PARTICIPATION IN THE MARCH 12 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND MAYORSHIP ELECTIONS BY LETTING THE FINAL FILING DATE (FEBRUARY 10) PASS WITHOUT PROPOSING CANDIDATES. THEY CONTINUED TO JUSTIFY THEIR NON-PARTICIPATION WITH PUBLIC STATEMENTS CONDEMNING THE ELECTION PROCESS BUT

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WERE UNABLE TO GENERATE ANY WIDESPREAD PUBLIC SUPPORT. PRESIDENT ROMERO CONTINUED TO ENJOY THE SUPPORT OF HIS MILITARY BACKERS AND HIS OTHER MAJOR POWER BASE, THE WEALTHY ELITE, STEADILY INCREASED THEIR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SUPPORT DURING FEBRUARY.

THERE WERE AN INCREASING NUMBER OF SMALL-SCALE HIT-

AND-RUN TYPE OPERATIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE LEFT AGAINST THE GOES BOTH IN SAN SALVADOR AND OUTLYING AREAS BUT NOTHING THAT SERIOUSLY THREATENED THE STABILITY OF THE GOES. THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC (BPR) AND OTHER OPPOSITION FORCES PUT FORTH A MAJOR EFFORT TO HOLD A DEMONSTRATION ON FEBRUARY 28 IN SAN SALVADOR IN COMMEMORATION OF ALLEGED DEATH OF DEMONSTRATORS PROTESTING THE RESULTS OF THE 1977 ELECTIONS. GOES SECURITY FORCES, WITH AN IMPRESSIVE AND WELL-COORDINATED SHOW OF STRENGTH, COMPLETELY STIFLED THIS EFFORT AND PREVENTED A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS CONFRONTATION (SEE SAN SALVADOR 1004).  
END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT ROMERO STRENGTHENS TIES WITH WEALTHY ELITE - WITH IS MILITARY SUPPORT IN APPARENT GOOD ORDER, PRESIDENT ROMERO THIS MONTH CONTINUED HIS SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN TO REGAIN THE FULL SUPPORT OF HIS OTHER MAJOR POWER BASE, THE WEALTHY ELITE (WHICH HAD DANGEROUSLY EORDED DURING OCT. AND NOV. 1977). THE PRESIDENT WAS THE FEATURED SPEAKER AT THE THIRD CONFERENCE ON U.S.-CENTRAL AMERICAN TRADE AND INVESTMENT IN NEW ORLEANS FEBUARY 16-18 AND SUBSEQUENTLY VISITED ATLANTA AND JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI. SIGNIFICANTLY, NINE OF THE SIXTEEN MEMBERS OF HIS OFFICIAL PARTY ON THIS TRIP WERE LEADING FIGURES IN THE POWERFUL NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISES (ANEP). EMBASSY SOURCES REPORT THAT THE WEALTHY ELITE WERE VERY PLEASED WITH THE TRIP AND ARE PRESENTLY OPENLY AND AFFIRMATEIVELY SUPPORTING ROMERO AND THE GOES.  
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2. CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS - THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CONTINUED ITS OPEN CRITICISM OF PRESIDENT ROMERO AND THE GOES PARTICULARLY IN THE AREAS OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION, NEED FOR INCREASED ASSISTANCE FOR CAMPESINOS AND RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS. WHILE THE RHETORIC WAS THE SAME AS IN PREVIOUS MONTHS AND THERE WAS NO OUTWARD SIGN OF A CHURCH-STATE ACCOMMODATION, THERE DID APPEAR TO BE A LESSENING OF THE FREQUENCY AND BITTERNESS OF THE CHURCH ATTACKS ON PRESIDENT ROMERO WHICH, IF CONTINUED, COULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO SOME FORM OF DIALOGUE.

3. OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES - THE UNO COALITION (PDC, MNR, UDN), THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN EL SALVADOR, DELIERATELY ALLOWED THE FINAL FILING DATE OF FEBRUARY 10 FOR CANDIDATES IN THE MARCH 12 ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND MAYORS TO PASS, THEREBY CONFIRMING THEIR PREVIOUSLY STATED INTENTION TO BOYCOTT THE ELECTIONS. THEY WERE GIVEN UNHINDERED AND UNCENSORED OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPRESS THEIR EASONS FOR THE BOYCOTT (FRAUD, NO CHANCE TO WIN, AND THE PARTICULARLY OBJECTIONABLE GOES-CONTROLLED ELECTIONS COUNCIL) IN THE PRESS, RADIO AND ONE OUTSPOKEN HALF-HOUR TELEVISION SHOW ON FEBRUARY 9.

4. TOWARD THE END OF THE MONTH THE UNO, USING THE WIFE OF EXILED 1977 UNO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COL. CLARAMOUNT, MADE SEVERAL UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO HAVE THE WEAK, CONSERVATIVE SALVADORAN POPULAR PARTY (PPS)--THE ONLY OPPOSITION TO THE GOES' PC IN THE MARCH ELECTIONS--DECLARED INELIGIBLE. GENERAL PUBLIC REACTION TO ELECTIONS APPEARS ONE OF APATHY, COMBINED WITH FEELING UNO COALITION GROWING STEADILY WEAKER.

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AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 1385

5. LABOR SCENE - SMALL SALVADORAN LABOR MOVEMENT REMAINED ACTIVE DURING FEBRUARY BUT WITH NOTICEABLY FEWER OPEN CONFRONTATIONS WITH GOES THAN IN RECENT MONTHS. ON FEBRUARY 13, ELEVEN MORE WORKERS WERE CHARGED AND TURNED OVER TO COURTS (PRESUMABLY UNDER THE LAW OF PUBLIC ORDER) FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN JANUARY TAKEOVER OF IZALCO SUGAR MILL (SEE SAN SALVADOR A-11). FOUR OF THE SEVENTEEN ORIGINALLY DETAINED WERE SET FREE. THE UNITED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS' UNION (SUTC - PART OF FELIPE ZALDIVAR'S FESINCONSTRANS), MADE UP OF APPROXIMATELY 30,000 WORKERS, WENT ON A GENERAL STRIKE FEBRUARY 4. ON FEBRUARY 8, THE GOES, THROUGH A DECREE BY THE MINISTRY OF LABOR, SUBMITTED THE DISPUTE TO COMPULSORY ARBITRATION (SEE SAN SALVADOR 0701). ON FEBRUARY 15, THE SUTC LEADERSHIP ACCUSED THE NATIONAL POLICE IN SAN MIGUEL OF HAVING TORTURED MIGUEL ANGEL PORTILLO,

AN SUTC LEADER, FOR HIS PREVIOUS PARTICIPATION IN STRIKE.  
ON FEBRUARY 7, THE NATIONAL GUARD ARRESTED THREE WORKERS  
FOR HAVING ALLEGEDLY TRIED TO START AN ILLEGAL STRIKE  
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IN THE FABRICA DE TUBES (S.A.) NEAR SANTA ANA.

6. CHRONOLOGY OF OPPOSITION, TERRORIST AND SECURITY  
FORCES ACTIVITIES:

FEBRUARY 2 - THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED NATIONALIST  
DEMOCRATIC UNION (UDN) DENOUNCED THE AREST BY THE  
NATIONAL GUARD OF CARLOS PERALTA ABARCA, A WORKER AFFILIATED  
WITH THE UDN.

FEBRUARY 3 - CHARGES OF ROBBERY AGAINST JUAN JOSE  
MOLINA WERE DROPPED, BUT HIS DETENTION FOR TRIAL ON CHARGES  
OF AGGRAVATED ASSAULT WAS DECREED BY A JUDGE OF THE  
CRIMINAL COURT OF SAN SALVADOR. MOLINA WAS BEING  
HELD FOR ACTIONS HE UNDERTOOK IN OCTOBER 1976 AGAINST  
TWO MEMBERS OF THE UDN WHILE STILL CHIEF OF POLICE  
IN CIUDAD DELGADO.

FEBRUARY 5 - BOMB EXPLOSION IN STADIUM OF CITY  
OF SAN MIGUEL. NO INJURIES.

FEBRUARY 8 - THREE BOMB EXPLOSIONS, REPORTEDLY  
SET OFF BY THE FPL, IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY OF  
SAN MIGUEL, WOUNDING ONE WOMAN AND HER CHILD.

FEBRUARY 9 - A DENUNCIATION WAS LDGED IN THE  
NATIONAL POLICE STATION IN SANTA ANA AGAINST THE LOCAL  
COMMANDANT (THE PRINCIPAL MILITARY REPRESENTATIVE IN CANTONS,  
USUALLY AN ARMY SERGEANT) IN THE TOWN OF EL CONGO FOR  
INFLECTING BULLET WOUNDS ON ANDRES ABELINO CUELLAR, A LOCAL  
WORKER.

FEBRUARY 14 - FOUR AGENTS OF THE MINICIPAL POLICE  
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OF SAN SALVADOR WERE ARRESTED FOR USE OF EXCESSIVE FORCE  
AGAINST THE STUDENT JOSE FRANCISCO RIVERA.

FEBRUARY 22 - THE SECOND COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS  
IN SAN SALVADOR ORDERED THE DETENTION OF MARIO ROLANDO  
ALFARO (AN ALLEGED MEMBER OF THE BPR) FOR DISSEMINATING

"SUBVERSIVE" PROPAGANDO AND PARTICIPATING IN DEMONSTRATIONS  
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SAN VICENTE.

FEBRUARY 23 - A JURY CONVICTED THREE FORMER MEMBERS  
OF THE NATIONAL GUARD FOR THE KIDNAP-MURDER IN JULY 1974  
OF CARLOS EDUARDO MEZA SANDOVAL, A FARMER IN THE DEPARTMENT  
OF SANTA ANA.

FEBRUARY 27 - THE SECOND COURT OF CRIMINAL  
APPEALS ORDERED THE DETENTION OF HERIBERTO GUZMAN  
FOR HAVING DISSEMINATED "SUBVERSIVE" PROPAGANDA IN  
THE CITY OF SAN MIGUEL, CONTRARY TO NEW LAW OF  
PUBLIC ORDER.

FEBRUARY 28 - BPR AND SUPPORTERS PUBLICIZED AND  
ATTEMPTED TO ORGANIZE DEMONSTRATION IN SAN SALVADOR  
TO HONOR "MARTYRS" OF FEBRUARY 28, 1977. GOES  
SEALED OFF AREA OF PROPOSED "ILLEGAL" DEMONSTRATION,  
SET UP ROAD BLOCKS, UTILIZED AERIAL SURVEILLANCE AND  
EFFECTIVELY STYMIED ANY TYPE OF PUBLIC GATHERING (SEE  
SAN SALVADOR 1004).  
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## Message Attributes

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